

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A process of liquefying a gaseous, methane-rich feed to a liquefied product, said liquefaction process comprising the steps of:
- (a) providing the gaseous, methane-rich feed at elevated pressure to a first tube side of a main heat exchanger at its warm end, cooling, liquefying and sub-cooling the gaseous, methane-rich feed against evaporating refrigerant to get a liquefied stream, removing the liquefied stream from the main heat exchanger at its cold end and passing the liquefied stream to storage as liquefied product;
 - (b) removing evaporated refrigerant from the shell side of the main heat exchanger at its warm end;
 - (c) compressing in at least one refrigerant compressor the evaporated refrigerant to get high-pressure refrigerant;
 - (d) at least partly condensing the high-pressure refrigerant and separating in a separator the partly-condensed refrigerant into a liquid heavy refrigerant fraction and a gaseous light refrigerant fraction;
 - (e) sub-cooling the heavy refrigerant fraction in a second tube side of the main heat exchanger to get a sub-cooled heavy refrigerant stream, introducing the heavy refrigerant stream at reduced pressure into the shell side of the main heat exchanger at its mid-point, and allowing the heavy refrigerant stream to evaporate in the shell side; and
 - (f) cooling, liquefying and sub-cooling at least part of the light refrigerant fraction in a third tube side of the main heat exchanger to get a sub-cooled light refrigerant stream, introducing the light refrigerant stream at reduced pressure into the shell side of the main heat exchanger at its cold end, and allowing the light refrigerant stream to evaporate in the shell side, the process further comprising adjusting the composition and the amount of refrigerant and controlling the liquefaction process, using an advanced process controller based on model predictive control to determine simultaneous control actions for a set of manipulated variables in order to optimize at least one of a set of parameters whilst controlling at least one of a set of controlled variables, wherein the set of manipulated variables includes the mass flow rate of the heavy refrigerant fraction, the mass flow rate of the light refrigerant fraction, the amount of refrigerant components make-up, the amount of refrigerant removed, the capacity of the refrigerant compressor

and the mass flow rate of the methane-rich feed, wherein the set of controlled variables includes the temperature difference at the warm end of the main heat exchanger, a variable relating to the temperature of the liquefied natural gas, the composition of the refrigerant entering the separator of step (d), the pressure in the shell of the main heat exchanger, the pressure in the separator of step (d) and the level of the liquid in the separator of step (d), and wherein the set of variables to be optimized includes the production of liquefied product and wherein the controlling of the at least one of a set of controlled variables comprises controlling the pressure in the separator of step (d).

2. (original) The process of claim 1 wherein the set of controlled variables further includes the first mid point temperature difference.
3. (original) The process of claim 2 wherein the set of controlled variables further includes the second mid point temperature difference.
4. (original) The process of claim 1 wherein the set of controlled variables further includes the temperature of the gas being liquefied in the first tube side at the midpoint.
5. (original) The process of claim 2 wherein the set of controlled variables further includes the temperature of the gas being liquefied in the first tube side at the midpoint.
6. (original) The process of claim 3 wherein the set of controlled variables further includes the temperature of the gas being liquefied in the first tube side at the midpoint.
7. (original) The process of claim 1 wherein the variable relating to the temperature of the liquefied natural gas is the temperature of the liquefied natural gas removed from the main heat exchanger.
8. (original) The process of claim 2 wherein the variable relating to the temperature of the liquefied natural gas is the temperature of the liquefied natural gas removed from the main heat exchanger.
9. (original) The process of claim 4 wherein the variable relating to the temperature of the liquefied natural gas is the temperature of the liquefied natural gas removed from the main heat exchanger.
10. (original) The process of claim 1 further comprising reducing the pressure of the liquefied stream to get the liquefied product which is passed to storage and an off-gas,

and the variable relating to the temperature of the liquefied natural gas is the amount of off-gas.

11. (original) The process of claim 2 further comprising reducing the pressure of the liquefied stream to get the liquefied product which is passed to storage and an off-gas, and the variable relating to the temperature of the liquefied natural gas is the amount of off-gas.

12. (original) The process of claim 4 further comprising reducing the pressure of the liquefied stream to get the liquefied product which is passed to storage and an off-gas, and the variable relating to the temperature of the liquefied natural gas is the amount of off-gas.

13. (original) The process of claim 1 wherein adjusting the amount of refrigerant comprises venting gaseous refrigerant.

14. (original) The process of claim 2 wherein adjusting the amount of refrigerant comprises venting gaseous refrigerant.

15. (original) The process of claim 4 wherein adjusting the amount of refrigerant comprises venting gaseous refrigerant.

16. (cancelled)

17. (cancelled)

18. (original) The process of claim 1 wherein adjusting the amount of refrigerant comprises draining liquid refrigerant.

19. (original) The process of claim 2 wherein adjusting the amount of refrigerant comprises draining liquid refrigerant.

20. (original) The process of claim 4 wherein adjusting the amount of refrigerant comprises draining liquid refrigerant.

21. (cancelled)

22. (cancelled)

23. (original) The process of claim 1 wherein the refrigerant includes nitrogen and propane, and the set of variables to be optimized further includes the nitrogen content of the refrigerant and the propane content of the refrigerant, wherein the nitrogen content is minimized and the propane content is maximized.

24. (original) The process of claim 2 wherein the refrigerant includes nitrogen and propane, and the set of variables to be optimized further includes the nitrogen content

of the refrigerant and the propane content of the refrigerant, wherein the nitrogen content is minimized and the propane content is maximized.

25. (original) The process of claim 4 wherein the refrigerant includes nitrogen and propane, and the set of variables to be optimized further includes the nitrogen content of the refrigerant and the propane content of the refrigerant, wherein the nitrogen content is minimized and the propane content is maximized.

26. (cancelled)

27. (cancelled)

28. (cancelled)

29. (cancelled)

30. (original) The process of claim 1 wherein the set of controlled variables further includes the power required to drive the refrigerant compressor(s).

31. (original) The process of claim 2 wherein the set of controlled variables further includes the power required to drive the refrigerant compressor(s).

32. (original) The process of claim 23 wherein the set of controlled variables further includes the power required to drive the refrigerant compressor(s).

33. (original) The process of claim 1 wherein the manipulated variable capacity of the refrigerant compressor is the speed of the refrigerant compressor, the angle of the inlet guide vane of the refrigerant compressor, or both.

34. (original) The process of claim 2 wherein the manipulated variable capacity of the refrigerant compressor is the speed of the refrigerant compressor, the angle of the inlet guide vane of the refrigerant compressor, or both.

35. (original) The process of claim 4 wherein the manipulated variable capacity of the refrigerant compressor is the speed of the refrigerant compressor, the angle of the inlet guide vane of the refrigerant compressor, or both.

36. (cancelled)

37. (cancelled)

38. (cancelled)

39. (cancelled)

40. (cancelled)

41. (cancelled)

42. (cancelled)

43. (original) The process of claim 1 wherein partly condensing the high-pressure refrigerant is done in at least one heat exchanger by means of indirect heat exchange with auxiliary refrigerant evaporating at a suitable pressure, and wherein evaporated auxiliary refrigerant is compressed in at least one auxiliary refrigerant compressor and condensed by heat exchange with an external coolant, and the set of manipulated variables further includes the capacity of the auxiliary refrigerant compressor(s), and in that the set of controlled variables further includes the power required to drive the auxiliary refrigerant compressor(s).

44. (original) The process of claim 2 wherein partly condensing the high-pressure refrigerant is done in at least one heat exchanger by means of indirect heat exchange with auxiliary refrigerant evaporating at a suitable pressure, and wherein evaporated auxiliary refrigerant is compressed in at least one auxiliary refrigerant compressor and condensed by heat exchange with an external coolant, and the set of manipulated variables further includes the capacity of the auxiliary refrigerant compressor(s), and in that the set of controlled variables further includes the power required to drive the auxiliary refrigerant compressor(s).

45. (original) The process of claim 3 wherein partly condensing the high-pressure refrigerant is done in at least one heat exchanger by means of indirect heat exchange with auxiliary refrigerant evaporating at a suitable pressure, and wherein evaporated auxiliary refrigerant is compressed in at least one auxiliary refrigerant compressor and condensed by heat exchange with an external coolant, and the set of manipulated variables further includes the capacity of the auxiliary refrigerant compressor(s), and in that the set of controlled variables further includes the power required to drive the auxiliary refrigerant compressor(s).

46. (original) The process of claim 4 wherein partly condensing the high-pressure refrigerant is done in at least one heat exchanger by means of indirect heat exchange with auxiliary refrigerant evaporating at a suitable pressure, and wherein evaporated auxiliary refrigerant is compressed in at least one auxiliary refrigerant compressor and condensed by heat exchange with an external coolant, and the set of manipulated variables further includes the capacity of the auxiliary refrigerant compressor(s), and in that the set of controlled variables further includes the power required to drive the auxiliary refrigerant compressor(s).

- 47. (cancelled)
- 48. (cancelled)
- 49. (cancelled)
- 50. (cancelled)
- 51. (cancelled)
- 52. (cancelled)
- 53. (cancelled)
- 54. (cancelled)
- 55. (previously presented) The process of claim 43 wherein the manipulated variable capacity of the auxiliary refrigerant compressor is the speed of the auxiliary refrigerant compressor, the angle of the inlet guide vane of the auxiliary refrigerant compressor, or both.
- 56. (previously presented) The process of claim 44 wherein the manipulated variable capacity of the auxiliary refrigerant compressor is the speed of the auxiliary refrigerant compressor, the angle of the inlet guide vane of the auxiliary refrigerant compressor, or both.
- 57. (previously presented) The process of claim 45 wherein the manipulated variable capacity of the auxiliary refrigerant compressor is the speed of the auxiliary refrigerant compressor, the angle of the inlet guide vane of the auxiliary refrigerant compressor, or both.
- 58. (cancelled)
- 59. (cancelled)
- 60. (cancelled)
- 61. (cancelled)
- 62. (cancelled)
- 63. (cancelled)
- 64. (cancelled)
- 65. (cancelled)
- 66. (cancelled)
- 67. (cancelled)
- 68. (cancelled)

69. (new) A process of liquefying a gaseous, methane-rich feed to a liquefied product, said liquefaction process comprising the steps of:
- (a) providing the gaseous, methane-rich feed at elevated pressure to a first tube side of a main heat exchanger at its warm end, cooling, liquefying and sub-cooling the gaseous, methane-rich feed against evaporating refrigerant to get a liquefied stream, removing the liquefied stream from the main heat exchanger at its cold end and passing the liquefied stream to storage as liquefied product;
 - (b) removing evaporated refrigerant from the shell side of the main heat exchanger at its warm end;
 - (c) compressing in at least one refrigerant compressor the evaporated refrigerant to get high-pressure refrigerant;
 - (d) at least partly condensing the high-pressure refrigerant and separating in a separator the partly-condensed refrigerant into a liquid heavy refrigerant fraction and a gaseous light refrigerant fraction;
 - (e) sub-cooling the heavy refrigerant fraction in a second tube side of the main heat exchanger to get a sub-cooled heavy refrigerant stream, introducing the heavy refrigerant stream at reduced pressure into the shell side of the main heat exchanger at its mid-point, and allowing the heavy refrigerant stream to evaporate in the shell side; and
 - (f) cooling, liquefying and sub-cooling at least part of the light refrigerant fraction in a third tube side of the main heat exchanger to get a sub-cooled light refrigerant stream, introducing the light refrigerant stream at reduced pressure into the shell side of the main heat exchanger at its cold end, and allowing the light refrigerant stream to evaporate in the shell side, the process further comprising adjusting the composition and the amount of refrigerant and controlling the liquefaction process, using an advanced process controller based on model predictive control to determine simultaneous control actions for a set of manipulated variables in order to optimize at least one of a set of parameters whilst controlling at least one of a set of controlled variables, wherein the set of manipulated variables includes the mass flow rate of the heavy refrigerant fraction, the mass flow rate of the light refrigerant fraction, the amount of refrigerant components make-up, the amount of refrigerant removed, the capacity of the refrigerant compressor and the mass flow rate of the methane-rich feed, wherein the set of controlled variables includes the temperature difference at the warm end of the main heat exchanger, a

variable relating to the temperature of the liquefied natural gas, the composition of the refrigerant entering the separator of step (d), the pressure in the shell of the main heat exchanger, the pressure in the separator of step (d) and the level of the liquid in the separator of step (d), and wherein the set of variables to be optimized includes the production of liquefied product and wherein the controlling of the at least one of a set of controlled variables comprises controlling the pressure in the shell of the main heat exchanger.

70. (new) The process of claim 69 wherein the set of controlled variables further includes the first mid point temperature difference.

71. (new) The process of claim 70 wherein the set of controlled variables further includes the second mid point temperature difference.

72. (new) The process of claim 69 wherein the set of controlled variables further includes the temperature of the gas being liquefied in the first tube side at the midpoint.

73. (new) The process of claim 70 wherein the set of controlled variables further includes the temperature of the gas being liquefied in the first tube side at the midpoint.

74. (new) The process of claim 71 wherein the set of controlled variables further includes the temperature of the gas being liquefied in the first tube side at the midpoint.

75. (new) The process of claim 69 wherein the variable relating to the temperature of the liquefied natural gas is the temperature of the liquefied natural gas removed from the main heat exchanger.

76. (new) The process of claim 70 wherein the variable relating to the temperature of the liquefied natural gas is the temperature of the liquefied natural gas removed from the main heat exchanger.

77. (new) The process of claim 72 wherein the variable relating to the temperature of the liquefied natural gas is the temperature of the liquefied natural gas removed from the main heat exchanger.

78. (new) The process of claim 69 further comprising reducing the pressure of the liquefied stream to get the liquefied product which is passed to storage and an off-

gas, and the variable relating to the temperature of the liquefied natural gas is the amount of off-gas.

79. (new) The process of claim 70 further comprising reducing the pressure of the liquefied stream to get the liquefied product which is passed to storage and an off-gas, and the variable relating to the temperature of the liquefied natural gas is the amount of off-gas.

80. (new) The process of claim 72 further comprising reducing the pressure of the liquefied stream to get the liquefied product which is passed to storage and an off-gas, and the variable relating to the temperature of the liquefied natural gas is the amount of off-gas.

81. (new) The process of claim 69 wherein adjusting the amount of refrigerant comprises venting gaseous refrigerant.

82. (new) The process of claim 70 wherein adjusting the amount of refrigerant comprises venting gaseous refrigerant.

83. (new) The process of claim 72 wherein adjusting the amount of refrigerant comprises venting gaseous refrigerant.

84. (new) The process of claim 69 wherein adjusting the amount of refrigerant comprises draining liquid refrigerant.

85. (new) The process of claim 70 wherein adjusting the amount of refrigerant comprises draining liquid refrigerant.

86. (new) The process of claim 72 wherein adjusting the amount of refrigerant comprises draining liquid refrigerant.

87. (new) The process of claim 69 wherein the refrigerant includes nitrogen and propane, and the set of variables to be optimized further includes the nitrogen content of the refrigerant and the propane content of the refrigerant, wherein the nitrogen content is minimized and the propane content is maximized.

88. (new) The process of claim 70 wherein the refrigerant includes nitrogen and propane, and the set of variables to be optimized further includes the nitrogen content of the refrigerant and the propane content of the refrigerant, wherein the nitrogen content is minimized and the propane content is maximized.

89. (new) The process of claim 72 wherein the refrigerant includes nitrogen and propane, and the set of variables to be optimized further includes the nitrogen content

of the refrigerant and the propane content of the refrigerant, wherein the nitrogen content is minimized and the propane content is maximized.

90. (new) The process of claim 69 wherein the set of controlled variables further includes the power required to drive the refrigerant compressor(s).

91. (new) The process of claim 70 wherein the set of controlled variables further includes the power required to drive the refrigerant compressor(s).

92. (new) The process of claim 87 wherein the set of controlled variables further includes the power required to drive the refrigerant compressor(s).

93. (new) The process of claim 69 wherein the manipulated variable capacity of the refrigerant compressor is the speed of the refrigerant compressor, the angle of the inlet guide vane of the refrigerant compressor, or both.

94. (new) The process of claim 70 wherein the manipulated variable capacity of the refrigerant compressor is the speed of the refrigerant compressor, the angle of the inlet guide vane of the refrigerant compressor, or both.

95. (new) The process of claim 72 wherein the manipulated variable capacity of the refrigerant compressor is the speed of the refrigerant compressor, the angle of the inlet guide vane of the refrigerant compressor, or both.

96. (new) The process of claim 69 wherein partly condensing the high-pressure refrigerant is done in at least one heat exchanger by means of indirect heat exchange with auxiliary refrigerant evaporating at a suitable pressure, and wherein evaporated auxiliary refrigerant is compressed in at least one auxiliary refrigerant compressor and condensed by heat exchange with an external coolant, and the set of manipulated variables further includes the capacity of the auxiliary refrigerant compressor(s), and in that the set of controlled variables further includes the power required to drive the auxiliary refrigerant compressor(s).

97. (new) The process of claim 70 wherein partly condensing the high-pressure refrigerant is done in at least one heat exchanger by means of indirect heat exchange with auxiliary refrigerant evaporating at a suitable pressure, and wherein evaporated auxiliary refrigerant is compressed in at least one auxiliary refrigerant compressor and condensed by heat exchange with an external coolant, and the set of manipulated variables further includes the capacity of the auxiliary refrigerant compressor(s), and

in that the set of controlled variables further includes the power required to drive the auxiliary refrigerant compressor(s).

98. (new) The process of claim 71 wherein partly condensing the high-pressure refrigerant is done in at least one heat exchanger by means of indirect heat exchange with auxiliary refrigerant evaporating at a suitable pressure, and wherein evaporated auxiliary refrigerant is compressed in at least one auxiliary refrigerant compressor and condensed by heat exchange with an external coolant, and the set of manipulated variables further includes the capacity of the auxiliary refrigerant compressor(s), and in that the set of controlled variables further includes the power required to drive the auxiliary refrigerant compressor(s).

99. (new) The process of claim 72 wherein partly condensing the high-pressure refrigerant is done in at least one heat exchanger by means of indirect heat exchange with auxiliary refrigerant evaporating at a suitable pressure, and wherein evaporated auxiliary refrigerant is compressed in at least one auxiliary refrigerant compressor and condensed by heat exchange with an external coolant, and the set of manipulated variables further includes the capacity of the auxiliary refrigerant compressor(s), and in that the set of controlled variables further includes the power required to drive the auxiliary refrigerant compressor(s).

100. (new) The process of claim 96 wherein the manipulated variable capacity of the auxiliary refrigerant compressor is the speed of the auxiliary refrigerant compressor, the angle of the inlet guide vane of the auxiliary refrigerant compressor, or both.

101. (new) The process of claim 97 wherein the manipulated variable capacity of the auxiliary refrigerant compressor is the speed of the auxiliary refrigerant compressor, the angle of the inlet guide vane of the auxiliary refrigerant compressor, or both.

102. (new) The process of claim 98 wherein the manipulated variable capacity of the auxiliary refrigerant compressor is the speed of the auxiliary refrigerant compressor, the angle of the inlet guide vane of the auxiliary refrigerant compressor, or both.